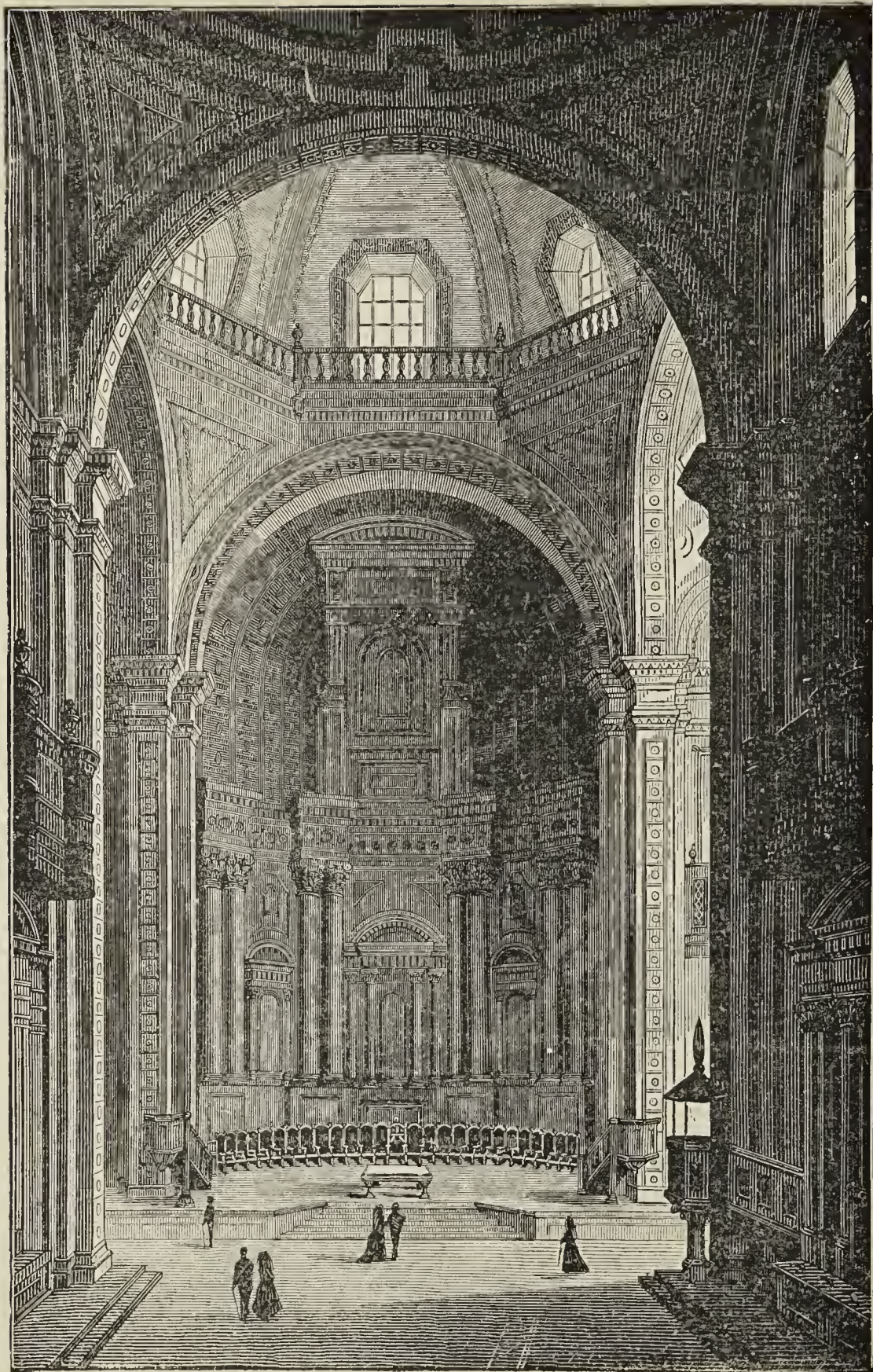


LETTER
FROM
OUR SISTER EPISCOPAL CHURCH
IN
MEXICO
TO
THE CHURCH PEOPLE OF AMERICA.



BUILDINGS NEAR THE SQUARE IN THE CITY OF MEXICO.

NEW YORK :
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THE CHURCH,"



CATHEDRAL OF THE MEXICAN BRANCH OF THE CHURCH IN THE CITY OF MEXICO.

TO THE CHURCH PEOPLE IN AMERICA.

MEXICO, *September*, 1878.

DEAR BRETHREN IN CHRIST:

AS members of the Anglican Church on both sides of the water, and who are deeply interested in and are working for the Church in this Republic; as those who have striven against fearful opposition, and are still striving, and hoping and praying, spending our best strength and life for the Master, and this Branch of His Church Militant on Earth; we are deeply solicitous that the Church in our own lands should know fully about our work, its history, and its present condition and needs. We will begin with a short sketch of the early formation of this Branch of the Church. In the year 1864 a former Roman Catholic Presbyterian, Francis Aguilar, together with a few laymen, engaged in an earnest Christian work in this Capital, and endeavored to organize a Branch of the Church in the Republic of Mexico that should maintain the Faith in its primitive purity and integrity, and that should favor the general circulation of the Holy Scriptures. This Church work thus commenced was afterward carried forward with marvelous power by another former Roman Catholic Presbyterian by the name of Manuel Aguas. Francis Aguilar and Manuel Aguas have both died, but the Mexican Branch of the Church still works on for the Master most faithfully and effectively. It is not the work of man, but of our Triune God. In connection with this Mexican Branch of the Church there are now over fifty well-organized congregations, while it has memberships awaiting organization in thirty other places in the Republic. It has magnificent former Roman Catholic Church buildings in this Capital. It has established eight church schools, connected with which there are over 250 children, 100 of which are, from absolute necessity, being sheltered, clothed, and fed by the Church. It has an ably conducted Theological Seminary

with thoroughly qualified professors, and seven earnest students, and a weekly Church paper, edited with marked ability, while in its ministry and among its active lay readers and other workers, there are men of very high Christian attainments and of rare power. Its membership consists of about 3,500. The faith, Christian enthusiasm, and devotion that mark the public services and labors of this Church, remind one of the zeal and self-sacrifice of the early Christians. This Mexican Branch of the Church has been saddened by tears, wrung from terrible sufferings and by the life-blood of many whose lives have been laid down, in the firmness of their faith, during the cruel persecutions it has passed through. To the poor the Gospel has been preached in Mexico, and the membership of this Church, now rich in *faith*, has been gathered from the *poor*.

Through the generous gifts of a few Christians in the United States, it has by God's blessing been enabled to achieve these grand results for the Master. A glorious future awaits it, incalculable in its importance, which it will be powerless to enter upon, except in a crippled condition, without the generous help of our brethren in Christ of America. In faith and order it is in harmony with the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States. Through its instrumentality, Episcopalians in other lands have now the opportunity of doing a grand work for Christ, in this nation just coming out of its superstition and ignorance. The question now to be pressed home upon Episcopalians is a solemn one: Shall this grand opportunity be made use of or lost?

The dangers that gather round this precious work sadly threaten it. The Romanists, in their blind and bitter hatred, are lavishly spending their money to crush it. Bravely has it kept at bay those who have so lavishly used their wealth against it for years past. This past heroic effort to sustain the faith and order of Christ's Church in their purity and integrity; its Christian triumphs in the good fight of the faith; its well-founded prospects for grand future usefulness, ought to thrill the hearts of all who love our Saviour, and to move them to generous efforts in its behalf.

As members of the Anglican Church of America and England, who have closely watched the heroic struggles of this sister Church in Mexico, and shared in its labors, and who keenly realize its present imminent danger from lack of sufficient funds to carry on its work, and from the utterly inadequate aid it is receiving from abroad, we unitedly call upon and entreat, for the love of Christ, all who would extend His kingdom on earth, to put forth every endeavor to rescue this precious Branch of Christ's Church in Mexico from the necessity of having to give up the glorious future, which lies ripe for the harvest before it, and having to disband a large portion of its present work. Let every Sunday-school teacher in our home churches endeavor to interest their class to do something to help it continue its work. Let our clergy earnestly endeavor to inform their congregations about this grand Church work, its past triumphs, its present opportunities and needs, and to move them to generous efforts in its behalf. Let the Mexican League, organized to aid it, be effectually supported by generous contributions, and additional laborers joining its ranks, and let the League make one grand effort to obtain subscriptions payable next year, that shall justify the Foreign Committee of the Protestant Episcopal Church, to make an adequate appropriation to enable us to continue this work.

Mexico seems a distant country to most of our church people, and as many of the readers of this article are not able to come to this beautiful land in person, we invite them to visit us in imagination, to take a stroll with us through the city, and to rejoice in the evidences of Christian work which one sees here. We will start from one of the principal squares or parks of the city, nearest its geographical center, called the "Alameda." Taking an easterly course, we go out of the square to the right, and enter a street called the "Bridge of St. Francis." No street here is more than one block long, every block being considered a separate street and having a new name. Passing one block, then we enter the First Street of St. Francis. Half way along this street to the right we pause before a high

wall and an arched gateway of stone. Looking through the spacious gateway, a beautiful garden greets the eye, filled with trees, shrubs, and bright-hued flowers. A handsome, evenly-graded walk, some twelve feet wide, runs through the middle of it, and terminates at its extremity at a finely-sculptured entrance to a massive building. The doors of this entrance stand invitingly open, so we pass through the street portal down through the garden, the wafted incense of the flowers pleasantly greeting us as we go. We pass in through the carved entrance beyond and find ourselves within the chapel of the old historic Church of St. Francis. Its proportions are striking and imposing. Lighted from above by two massive domes, all of stone (for there is not a piece of wood in the building except the doors, windows, and floor), the light is soft and pleasing to the eye. We see it is carpeted and provided with chairs for the congregation, and at the farther end we note the old familiar lectern. It is early yet; the congregation have not begun to arrive, so we pass through one side of the chapel, and by a door at the other side enter the main building. If we thought the proportions of the chapel imposing, what shall we say of this? More than four times the size of the chapel, it is simply a temple of magnificent distances. We are held in awe for a moment as we gaze aloft at the bold arches and vaulted domes, and at the chancel beyond, which is an arched recess of the full width and height of the entire building. This was once the Cathedral Church of the Roman Power in Mexico. How meet that it should become under the Providence of God, in turn, the center of a true Church and the pure Gospel of Christ!

The Church has been so poor that she has not been able to use this splendid temple. Now we notice men at work repairing, and perhaps in the not far distant future, up through those glorious domes and arches, may yet arise the pure incense of prayer and of praise. As we stand lost in contemplation we suddenly hear the tinkle of a bell, a door opens in the transept at the right of the chancel, and a troop of happy-faced boys, about sixty-one in number,

march in procession through the church into the chapel. They are the pupils of the St. Francis Church School. The daily five o'clock service is about to commence, so we will pass in after them. We take our seats near the garden entrance. Soon, down the broad flower-lined avenue we see advancing a procession of girls of all ages and conditions. We count them as they pass in by twos and take their seats. There are fifty of them. They are the pupils of our Girls' Church Boarding-School and Orphanage. Another procession of girls, numbering about seventy, soon enter from the street, file in and take their seats quietly and reverently. They belong to another of our Church schools, superintended by Mrs. Martinez, who devotes all her time, energy, and the love of a full heart in caring for it, and without a dollar's remuneration. Surely we reflect, this Church must be doing an earnest work, when it is looking out so carefully for the rising generation. Seven young men, of earnest features and reverent demeanor, next come down through the garden avenue, and file in next to the organ. They are the students of the Church Theological Seminary. Immediately behind them come the Faculty, Rev. H. C. Riley, President; Rev. Tomás Valdespino, Professor of Theology and Oratory; Rev. J. Medina, Professor of Hebrew, and Mr. Rhodakanaky, a native Greek, Professor of the Greek Language and Literature. In addition to these Professors, there will soon be a Chair of Ecclesiastical History, to fill which a native Mexican and church member has nearly finished his studies. Few theological schools have the talented Faculty of this, and it is justly a joy of this Church, and is one of the brightest hopes for its future welfare. Other persons come in by ones and twos, and soon the chapel is nearly full. Suddenly, from the side door of the chancel, four persons appear, wearing the old familiar white robes of the Church Catholic. They pass to either side and kneel. The congregation kneel with them, and there are a few minutes of silent prayer. Let us speak of those in the chancel. The first on the left, with gray hair and flowing gray beard, is the Rev. Mr. Maruri, formerly an old "comándante" in

the army, and who has turned, like Paul, all his military zeal and energy into the cause of Christ and His Church; and who, though offered lucrative positions in Government



REV. HENRY CHAUNCEY RILEY, D.D.,
BISHOP-ELECT OF THE MEXICAN BRANCH OF THE CHURCH.

employ, steadily refuses, preferring poverty and his ministry. Beyond him is the pastor of this church, the Rev. Tomas Valdespino, a man whose Christian zeal and elo-

quence would soon make him famous in the American or English Church. More often than not a tear may be seen here and there among his hearers, as they listen to his touching appeals and his vivid portrayals of the sacrifice and immortal sufferings of our Crucified Redeemer. The first figure kneeling on the right is the Rev. Henry C. Riley, a man whose devotion and self-abnegation in the cause of the Church militant have few parallels in the history of the American Church. He has labored here and in the United States for this Mexican Church since 1869, with a faith that seems to surmount all obstacles, and to remove mountains of difficulties. Besides laboring without remuneration, except the faith and joy in his heart, he has spent over \$40,000, a large part of his own means, in trying to build it up and place it on a sure foundation. But the time has come when he can no longer do what he has done, and he is looking with an anxiety beyond words to see if our sister Church will help him to save the precious plant, toiled for so arduously and prayed for so earnestly. God in His mercy grant this noble soul may not experience seeing an absorbing hope of his life fade away through our neglect. Beyond him kneels a man of singular history, the Rev. Ramon Betancourt. He was a bandit once, and the terror of the Island of Cuba. Some years ago in New York, impelled by his Roman fanaticism, he attended the Spanish service of Dr. Riley, armed with a knife to assassinate him.

The lesson read and the sermon were on the conversion of St. Paul. Betancourt felt his position so similar to that of Paul, that every word came to him as a personal appeal, and instead of leaving the church a fugitive from justice, with the blood of another fellow-creature on his soul, he left it with the Word of God in his hands, and is now laboring for this church with a zeal that laughs at poverty, exposure, and death in the cause of Christ.

Ministers and congregation rise and a hymn is announced. Ah! what a flood of song arises to and rings through the vaulted arches. There are no silent voices here of man, woman, nor child. The congregation seated,

the opening sentences of the liturgy are read, consisting of passages of Scripture, rich in their doctrinal simplicity and completeness. The regular order of its liturgy follows, and the responses are spoken out with a heartiness which carries a deep significance with it to the hearer, and bespeaks an evidence of the strong hold which this little National Episcopal Church has on the hearts of its people. Here is an earnestness and fervor which goes deep down into the substance of things hoped for, and which make us feel ashamed of the lukewarm half-whispered responses so often heard in our churches at home. The Benediction—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all," pronounced by every one, concludes the service.

The children of the various schools, and the students, file out in order, singing a grand processional hymn, and we follow them out through the garden of sweets from our visit to the chapel of the old historic church, bearing with us the grateful sense of a spiritual refreshment, sweeter than the perfume of the flowers we have passed through.

Every morning at eight o'clock, and every afternoon at five, through the week-days, the same scene takes place. In addition to this there is the full Wednesday evening service and sermon. On Sunday, morning service, sermon, and Sunday-school—communion service; and evening, service and sermon.

We are in the street of St. Francis again. Following our course by the same street, or series of streets, we pass five blocks, and at the left hand, at the corner of the sixth, we see a large, attractive sign, bearing the words, "Las Sagradas Escrituras," painted in block-letters of white, shaded with gold, on a rich crimson background. In the windows are displayed, in various and attractive bindings, the Word of Salvation. We notice several persons standing at them, reading from some of the books that lay open for perusal. One of them, evidently an "aquador" or "water-carrier," by the pad he carries on his back, is earnestly reading the Decalogue, and very likely, poor fellow, for the first time in his life. This is the depot of the

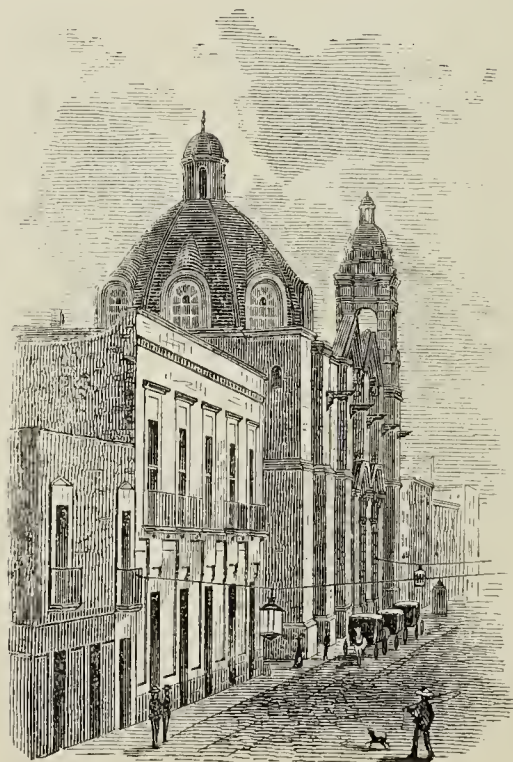
American Bible Society, lately established here, in a most valuable location on the Broadway of Mexico, secured by



REV. PRUDENCIO G. HERNANDEZ,
BISHOP-ELECT OF THE MEXICAN BRANCH OF THE CHURCH.

the energy and judgment of its agent, Dr. Gore, and is beginning to secure a respect and attention that is leading

its friends here to hope that a new era is being inaugurated for the Bible cause in this land. Passing on one block further, we enter on the principal square of Mexico, called the "Plaza de Armas." In the center is a beautiful garden, with fountains, seats, and walks, exquisitely cared for. On the opposite side is an immense building, occupying an area of four blocks, known as the "Palace," the headquarters of the Government and residence of the President. Occupying all the left side is the Great Cathedral and inclosure, said to be the largest church building on the American continent. We pass through the garden diagonally to the right, cross the square, and turn into the street parallel with the facade of the "Palace." Pursuing our way for the distance of five blocks, we turn to the left, and behold on our right, occupying the middle of the block, a large building with domes and bell-tower on the corner this way. This is the church of "San José de Gracia," and is a prize secured to this Mexican branch of the Church



CHURCH OF SAN JOSÉ DE GRACIA, OF THE MEXICAN BRANCH OF
THE CHURCH, CITY OF MEXICO.

by a former President, Benito Juarez. We enter it. It is of the same architectural stamp as that of St. Francis, but somewhat smaller; and had we not just come from the latter we should spend a longer time in gazing at its domes and arches than we now do. The regular service soon commences. The congregation is smaller than that of St. Francis, but there is the same fervor and earnestness.

On the right are some thirty-six boys from the Orphanage of "San Antonio Abad," located on the southern outskirts of the City. This Orphanage is presided over by Mrs. Ponce de Leon, a very intelligent, earnest Christian woman, formerly an exceedingly devoted Romanist, who held her images of the Virgin and Saints in most sacred estimation, but who one day got hold of a Bible, read the second Commandment, and became at once so thoroughly convinced of her error that she immediately took down her formerly worshiped picture and burned it.

The building of "San Antonio Abad," where the orphans are cared for, is an old Monastery, and occupies, with its grounds and chapel, a whole square. What an army of children could be here gathered from our country congregations, where there is often absolutely no opportunity for Christian education — and this with the help of a very little money. But to return. The service proceeds, and we join in the prayers and praises and feel a love and warmth again steal around our hearts, and when it concludes we join in the dear old familiar benediction, which here is a prayer, with a conviction that the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed most blessedly with these earnest people, and we slowly wend our way homeward, feeling that the evidences we have seen in our short afternoon and evening stroll, of the great Christian work going on here has warmed our hearts and strengthened our faith in the power of the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God; and in the Church Militant as its guardian and disseminator. And when we reflect that all this which has so warmed our hearts and strengthened our faith is but a fragment of what is going on throughout the nation, evidences of which are brought most touchingly to our notice by persons frequently coming

to this center of Christian work, from the many congregations working for the Master in other parts of the Republic ; when we who have fought a hard fight and gained an oasis of safety here in the Capital, receive ever and anon some faithful worker from a distant post, bringing a tale of horrible persecutions, or sometimes the account of a martyr's death, bearing on his own person at times the marks of wounds suffered for their faith, or again bringing in joy thrilling accounts of the triumphs of the truth ; we feel our hearts too full for utterance, and like Jacob wrestling with the Angel, we feel like wrestling with our difficulties with renewed strength, until out of them by the ministrations of the Holy Spirit shall be vouchsafed the blessing and help for which we pray.

Some practical mind may, after reading of these grand results of Christian labor, ask for what are funds needed ? Let it be remembered that the membership of this Church has been gathered from the poor (and poverty has a deeper depth here than in our own enlightened lands), and who, although they have been willing to suffer, and to meet danger and persecution in working for the Master, are absolutely without means to sustain the Christian work of this branch of Christ's Church.

Those earnest clergymen who are seeking to guide and educate it ; those faithful teachers in our church-schools ; those devoted missionaries that are traveling from point to point, visiting our many country congregations ; all these laborers (and how few they are for the magnitude of the harvest they are working in) are absolutely without the necessary funds to enable them to devote themselves exclusively to Christian effort, and to meet the expenses of building up a pure branch of the Church in a hostile field like this, unless Christians in other lands generously, from love to the Master, contribute the necessary funds for the bare necessities of the work.

Let it be remembered that the whole sum asked for, compared with the importance and extent of the object, is much less than is usually spent in many Christian missions. We would reiterate our earnest petition, that the responsibility

of raising the sum of \$25,000 per annum be distributed among our different churches and Sunday-schools, and among those whom God has made the stewards of ample worldly means. In this way, the needed funds to continue this Christian work can easily be raised.

And now, dear reader, whoever you may be, you can do *something* to help us if you only will. As you read this, let the Holy Spirit warm your heart to an effort, and the benediction of our Blessed Master shall rest on you and on us, here and there, who give even so much as a cup of cold water for the sake of Christ and His Church.

ALBERT E. MACKINTOSH,
Treasurer of the Mexican Branch of the Church.

MARY JOSEPHINE HOOKER,
*Directress of Girls' Church-School and Orphanage
of Church of Jesus.*

ANNA GRUT,
Correspondent of the "Mexican League" in Mexico.

In presenting this appeal for the noble and promising work in Mexico, from those who "speak that they do know, and testify that they have seen," the League asks for the prayerful consideration and generous response of the members of our own Branch of the Church of Christ.

The infant Church in Mexico is most grateful for the aid and countenance already extended to it, but its rapid and vigorous growth naturally demands an enlargement of our gifts.

It is an evidence of progress and a cause for Christian rejoicing that the yearly sum of \$20,000, deemed necessary for its support in 1875, should be inadequate now. For its full development, \$25,000 a year is needed and earnestly solicited.

It is a solemn question—Shall we embrace or not the grand opportunity *now* offered us, of establishing on firm foundations, a sister EPISCOPAL Church, *primitive* and *his-*

toric? Such a Church is the desire of the native Mexicans. Such a Church we desire to give them.

“But,” to use the words of Bishop Lee, of Delaware, “this much we may learn: if we withhold the hand of fellowship, the cordial God-speed and substantial evidences of sympathy, there are organized societies all ready to grasp the opportunities which we neglect. . . . Let our Church respond with one heart to a call so unwonted and so urgent.”

For the League:

C. A. HAMILTON,
Corresponding Secretary.

Contributions should be sent to the Treasurer of the League, Miss M. A. Stewart Brown, care of Messrs. Brown Brothers & Co., 59 Wall Street, New York, U. S.

By addressing the REV. ABBOTT BROWN, General Secretary, care of Messrs. Brown Brothers & Co., No. 59 Wall Street, N. Y., parishes may have the subject presented by him, and pamphlets containing information as to the work will be gladly sent in any number required.